



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, December 29, 2016

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK and TV-Asahi gave top play to reports on property damage from an earthquake with an intensity of lower 6 on the Japanese scale that struck Ibaraki Prefecture and surrounding regions on Wednesday evening. NTV and Fuji-TV led with reports on Defense Minister Inada's visit to Yasukuni Shrine this morning.

POLITICS

Inada visits Yasukuni Shrine

NHK reported on its 10:00 a.m. news program that Defense Minister Inada visited Yasukuni Shrine this morning for the first time since assuming her current post. Regarding the capacity in which she made the visit, Inada told reporters afterward that she wrote "Defense Minister Tomomi Inada" in the visitor's registry. "It means that Tomomi Inada, who is the defense minister, paid her respects as a citizen of this country. I made an offering using my own money." Inada added: "The president of the country that dropped the atomic bomb visited Hiroshima this year, and Prime Minister Abe expressed condolences at Pearl Harbor. I paid homage at the shrine in the hope of building peace for Japan and the world from a future-oriented perspective." In response to a question from a reporter about the possibility of China and South Korea reacting sharply to her visit to Yasukuni, Inada said: "I believe that people will understand the act of expressing respect and condolences to those who dedicated their lives to their country no matter what their historical views are and whether they are friends or foes."

All commercial networks aired similar reports in their noon news programs. NTV quoted a source connected to the Defense Ministry as expressing concern that Inada's visit to Yasukuni will undermine Japan's efforts to promote defense exchanges with China and South Korea. South Korea's Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Defense expressed displeasure at Inada's visit to the shrine.

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 27–28](#) (Nikkei)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Inada's Yasukuni visit elicits only moderate reaction on local social media

Defense Minister Inada's homage at Yasukuni Shrine has elicited only a moderate reaction on social media in Japan, as the number of tweets has not exceeded two thousands. The most popular message (retweeted almost 1,000 times) was posted by LDP Upper House lawmaker Masahiha Sato, who said: "I think Japan should become a country in which the prime minister can go to Yasukuni after visiting Pearl Harbor. What do you think?" Many Twitter users apparently "liked" this comment, with most of them saying that no person or country should object to Japanese politicians paying homage at the Shinto shrine. Some of the proponents reacted negatively to an NTV story on Inada's Yasukuni visit that highlighted some MOD officials' apprehension that it will slow down the momentum for bilateral defense exchanges with South Korea and China.

Inada's critics were skeptical of her motive for the visit, focusing on the following remark she made about Yasukuni several years ago: "Yasukuni is not a place to pledge not to repeat the horror of war again. It is a place to promise that 'we will follow in your footsteps if a contingency occurs in our homeland.'" One person tweeted that "Inada's visit proved that Prime Minister Abe's vow of tolerance and renunciation of war at Pearl Harbor was an empty promise."

SECURITY

U.S. notifies Japan of plan to resume aerial refueling training involving Ospreys

NHK reported this morning that the U.S. has notified the GOJ of its plan to resume early next month the aerial refueling training involving Ospreys that has been suspended since the accident off Nago on Dec. 13. The U.S. military has already restarted Osprey operations other than aerial refueling by explaining that the accident occurred not because of a problem with the aircraft itself but because of the damage sustained by its propeller during aerial refueling training. The U.S. military told the GOJ when it informed Japan of the resumption of Osprey flights on Dec. 19 that it would temporarily suspend all of its aerial refueling training in Japan and resume it after conducting pilot training and confirming training procedures.

U.S., Japanese leaders welcome partial return of NTA

Okinawa Times ran a Kyodo report from Honolulu saying that Prime Minister Abe stressed during his meeting with President Obama on Tuesday that there has been no change in the GOJ position that Henoko is the only option for the FRF construction. The premier also told the President that the GOJ has resumed work at Henoko following the recent Supreme Court ruling against the Okinawa prefectural government over its rescindment of the landfill permit issued earlier. The two leaders welcomed the recent return of a portion of the Northern Training Area and agreed on continued efforts to reduce the base-hosting burden on Okinawa. The President and the prime minister also confirmed the plan to conclude an agreement that will clarify and narrow the scope of the civilian component to be covered by the SOFA. Ryukyu Shimpo also reported on Abe's statement to the President on Futenma relocation in its front-page article.

- [Improvement sought in handling of SDF activity logs](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)
- [CCS Suga hopes to swiftly move Futenma](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: Tokyo continues to shun Okinawa in ongoing fight over U.S. base](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Inada decides not to view THAAD in Guam](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: Resumption of reclamation work off Henoko too hasty](#) (The Mainichi)

INTERNATIONAL

- [Gist of Japan-U.S. summit meeting Dec. 27](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Full text of President Obama's speech at Pearl Harbor](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Full text of speech by Japanese PM Abe at Pearl Harbor](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: PM Abe and President Obama](#) (Asahi)
- [Special Advisor to the PM to visit U.S. on Jan. 3](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Japan's Taiwan-relations organization renamed](#) (Yomiuri Evening edition)
- [Russia to ease visa requirements for Japanese citizens](#) (Yomiuri Evening edition)
- [Japan to set up embassies in Albania and three other countries](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: Top international news events in 2016 reflect a world shaken by populism](#) (The Japan News)

ECONOMY

- [Gov't lacks teeth in call for Zennoh reform](#) (Shukan Toyo Keizai)
- [MHLW to launch team to counter gambling addiction](#) (Yomiuri)

SCIENCE

- [Six drugs recommended for immunotherapy](#) (Asahi)
- [Pharmaceuticals agency likely to approve use of Opdivo for stomach cancer](#) (Asahi)
- [Large amount of illegal lumber purchased by China](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

OPINION POLLS

- [93% of those aged 18–20 who voted in last Upper House election plan to vote again, MIC survey](#) (Mainichi)
 - [Mainichi Shimbun-Saitama University opinion poll & results from Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Mainichi)
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